Stonewall



Building Inclusive Supply Chains

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is produced by Stonewall. Our vision is of a world where everyone, everywhere has equal rights. We will work until every person who is lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer + is living free from discrimination, prejudice and inequality, making our shared future safer, fairer and more prosperous.

Stonewall was founded in 1989. It was envisaged with courage, unity and hope, established as an advocacy organisation that would complement the work of other movements campaigning for equal rights. We deliver campaigns, programmes, and policy work that is focused on achieving deep, sustainable change, through convening, collaboration, and conversation.

We support parliamentarians and lawmakers; design policies and campaigns and deliver programmes and services which focus on achieving equal rights for LGBTQ+ people. Globally, we face increasing opposition to the belief that everyone deserves equal rights. It is more important than ever that we stand firm and advocate for what we know to be true: Everyone, everywhere, deserves equal rights To learn more about our work, visit us at **www.stonewall.org.uk**

This guide is produced as part of the Stonewall Proud Employers programme and was publised in September 2026.

Registered Charity No 1101255 (England and Wales) and SC039681 (Scotland)
Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where every LGBTQ+ person has equal rights. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter

Why Inclusive Procurement Matters

Your purchasing power gives you a unique opportunity to drive LGBTQ+ inclusion beyond your organisation. Your partnerships with suppliers allow you to create lasting change, supporting your supplier's LGBTQ+ workforce and advancing inclusive practice within your supply chain.

Building inclusive supply chains also benefits your organisation:

- **Consistency and talent –** when you make inclusion visible in all areas of your work, you are signalling that this is a core value of your organisation; in turn, this increases employee trust and strengthens perceptions of your brand externally.
- **Risk and Reputation –** your supply chain is often viewed as an extension of your own organisation. Knowing that your suppliers share and champion your values reduces the reputational risk to you in an era of increasing scrutiny on organisational behaviour.
- **Stronger relationships –** by working collaboratively with suppliers on inclusion you can strengthen relationships long-term, as well as facilitating the sharing of inclusion practice between organisations.

In most organisations, those working directly on inclusion, such as HR and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) teams or Employee Network Groups (ERGs), are not directly involved in the work of procurement processes and teams. This guide is designed for both those working directly on procurement and to support those working on inclusion to find ways to share expertise across your organisation in order to realise the benefits outlined above.

This guide draws learnings from the hundreds of organisations Stonewall works with to explore building inclusion into your procurement processes, from tendering to supporting suppliers and building long-term reciprocal relationships. The content of this guide will support you with good practice relating to the questions asked in the **Proud Employers Accreditation, the UK's leading LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion benchmarking tool.**

While it's not dealt with in detail in this resource, you might also consider less formal kinds of procurement and whether working with LGBTQ+ suppliers for ERG events or pride celebrations might support the aims of your work.

All organisations function differently; please shape and adapt the ideas shared below to have impact in your context.

Embedding Inclusion in Tendering

Including meaningful and appropriate questions and requirements about EDI in the tendering process is a simple way to send a strong message that inclusion is important to your organisation. It also sets out clear expectations from the start and helps use your influence to promote inclusion across industries.

The questions you ask, or requirements you set, will depend on your context, the nature of the contract and the supplier. When working with SMEs, you might consider a lighter touch approach that focuses on broader inclusion and a willingness to develop, whereas for larger organisations with significant contracts, you might consider asking questions in greater depth.

To tailor your approach to tender, you could consider:

- Does the supplier work directly with our employees?
- Does the supplier interact directly with our external audiences?
- Is LGBTQ+ inclusion particularly relevant to the products or services provided by the supplier? *For example, if the potential supplier is a recruitment agency, you may want to ask questions about how their process is LGBTQ+ inclusive, if they are providing wellbeing support, and whether their staff are appropriately trained.*
- Is it relevant to ask specifically about LGBTQ+ inclusion or would broader questions on inclusion be more appropriate? *For smaller organisations, they might take a holistic approach to inclusion which includes LGBTQ+ inclusion.*
- How much is the contract worth? *For example, some organisations ask a greater number of questions for contracts worth over a certain threshold.*
- What capacity does the supplier have to develop their inclusion work? *For example, small businesses may not have dedicated EDI teams so could evidence inclusion in less formal ways*

Top Tips

- **Ask appropriate EDI questions in tender documents** – to ensure alignment of values and identify opportunities for discussion and support.
- **Consider whether it is appropriate to include EDI requirements in the tender –** that ensure all suppliers uphold your commitment to inclusion
- **Target high-impact suppliers** – to ensure your work has the maximum possible impact and to minimise risk to your organisation.
- **Tailor your approach –** for example, many larger organisations ask suppliers to commit to their EDI policies where potential suppliers don't have capacity to introduce EDI or LGBTQ+ inclusion policies of their own.

Questions to ask

- What policies and support are in place for LGBTQ+ staff?
- Do you have a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy?
- Do you provide your staff with training on LGBTQ+ inclusion?
- Do you participate in external Diversity and Inclusion benchmarking programmes?

Supporting Suppliers to Deliver Inclusively

Once a contract has been awarded, consistent engagement and collaboration with suppliers on inclusion can support the long-term sustainability of the relationship as well as continue to mitigate risk and drive innovation in both organisations.

A strong first step here is to ensure that a shared commitment to inclusion is included within the contract between your organisations.

A commitment to growth

Some suppliers might not yet be as advanced in their inclusion work as your organisation. While it is important to maintain minimum standards when awarding contracts, leading organisations often view the ongoing supplier relationship as an opportunity to continue to influence.

This might include:

- A regular section on EDI within contract monitoring meetings
- Inviting all suppliers to join LGBTQ+ events hosted by your organisation
- Where inclusion issues arise, ensuring that your complaints process is accessible and robust
- Sharing good practice between organisations to support continued growth

Some organisations in your supply chain might have advanced LGBTQ+ inclusion programmes that create an excellent opportunity for shared learning between the two organisations. Where this is the case, creating opportunities for connection can help you both develop your work.

Supporting supplier staff

For some supplier staff, your organisation is their only workplace, despite being employed by another organisation. Your internal diversity and inclusion practices will affect them daily. Here are some key areas to consider for supporting supplier staff:

- **Consider your policies and guidance** – Are there specific inclusion-related policies that will apply to supplier staff, e.g. has your bullying and harassment policy, or inclusive language guidance been clearly communicated?
- **Shared training and learning** – Would it be beneficial to open up your training and inclusion events to supplier staff working on site?
- **ERG Engagement** – Should supplier staff working on site be invited to join your LGBTQ+ ERG?
- **Complaints Process** – If supplier staff need to report bullying and harassment or if your staff need to report bullying and harassment from supplier staff how will this be navigated?
- **Invite supplier staff to LGBTQ+ employee resource group events** – to support supplier staff to find support and community while working with your organisation.

Ongoing Communication and Shared Learning

Sharing knowledge between yourselves and your suppliers will help both organisations drive inclusion efforts forward. However, with responsibilities sitting across organisations, it can be challenging to ensure consistent communication.

You might consider:

- Ensuring your procurement team have access to high-quality training on LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Ensuring your procurement team have a point of contact within the network and HR/EDI teams and receive regular updates on inclusion work
- Adding key staff in supplier organisations to relevant mailing lists to ensure they receive updates and invitations to events
- When planning your inclusion events and training, consider whether you could collaborate with any of your suppliers to increase reach and reduce costs

Top Tips

Include broad inclusion objectives, or specific LGBTQ+ inclusion objectives, as part of your contract objectives/management – to support you to achieve tangible inclusion goals with your suppliers. Specific, timebound objectives – for example, implementing a particular policy within the next 12 months – might be particularly effective.

Include a diversity and inclusion slot in contract monitoring meetings - This can be inclusive of a wide range of diversity and inclusion topics, but we'd recommend ensuring that it covers LGBTQ+ issues. It's also a great opportunity to check in on any LGBTQ+ inclusion objectives that you've set as a condition of contract.

Create opportunities for collaboration and shared learning - procurement teams can facilitate connections between EDI teams and ERGs at both organisations to enable collaboration, learning and opportunities for partnership working



Inclusive Procurement Checklist

You can use these questions to support you to conduct your own gap analysis of LGBTQ+ inclusion in your supply chain. All organisations function differently and some of these questions might not be relevant in your context, but we hope it might help to consider actions you'd like to take.

- **Do you talk about the value of inclusion in your procurement policy?**
- **Are staff with procurement responsibilities provided with training and guidance on inclusive procurement?**
- **Do you include a commitment to inclusion in your tendering requirements?**
- **Do you include questions about inclusion in your tendering process?**
- **Do you ask potential suppliers to share their relevant policies or to sign up to your own?**
- **Do you consider commitments to inclusion in your contract awarding decisions?**
- **Do you support suppliers to consistently maintain inclusive practice during the course of a contract?**
- **Do you work collaboratively with your suppliers on diversity and inclusion initiatives?**
- **Do you provide diversity and inclusion support for supplier staff?**
- **Do you have a clear process for complaints about a supplier's approach to inclusion?**
- **Do you explore opportunities, where appropriate, to work with diverse suppliers?**
- **Do you have an inclusive procurement policy, setting out your organisation's approach to inclusive practice within your supply chain?**

You can also benchmark your supply chain work and receive detailed feedback from Stonewall's team of inclusion experts by taking part in our **Proud Employers Accreditation**.

Informal Approaches to Procurement

While most organisational procurement is run through dedicated teams and processes, there will be less formal instances where working with LGBTQ+ owned businesses might strengthen your work.

LGBTQ+ ERGs in particular can choose to use their purchasing power to support LGBTQ+ owned businesses as well as other businesses and organisations that support social change.

You might consider using LGBTQ+ owned catering companies for your ERG events or working with LGBTQ+ suppliers for your pride merchandise. When looking for training or speakers you might consider engaging LGBTQ+ charities to deliver as money invested with them supports their mission.

Working with LGBTQ+ suppliers can help you be more connected to your local community and will bring their experience and perspective to strengthen your work.